

Enforcement Concordat

The Principles of Good Enforcement: Policy and Procedures

This document sets out what businesses and others being regulated can expect from enforcement officers. It commits us to good enforcement policies and procedures. It may be supplemented by additional statements of enforcement policy. The primary function of central and local government enforcement work is to protect the public, the environment and groups such as consumers and workers. At the same time, carrying out enforcement functions in an equitable, practical and consistent manner helps to promote a thriving national and local economy. We are committed to these aims and to maintaining a fair and safe trading environment.

The effectiveness of legislation in protecting consumers or sections in society depends crucially on the compliance of those regulated. We recognise that most businesses want to comply with the law. We will, therefore, take care to help businesses and others meet their legal obligations without unnecessary expense, whilst also being committed to use firm action, including prosecution where appropriate, against those who flout the law or act irresponsibly. All citizens will reap the benefits of this policy through better information, choice and safety.

It is therefore proposed that we adopt the central and local government Concordat on Good Enforcement. Included in the term 'enforcement' are advisory visits and assisting with compliance as well as licensing and formal enforcement action. By adopting the Concordat we would commit ourselves to the following policies and procedures, which contribute to best value, and will provide information to show that we are observing them.

Principles of Good Enforcement:

Policy

STANDARDS

In consultation with business and other relevant interested parties who may wish to participate, including technical experts where appropriate, we will draw up clear standards setting out the level of service and performance the public and business people can expect to receive. We will publish these standards and our annual performance against them. The standards will be made available to businesses and others who are regulated.

OPENNESS

We will provide information and advice in plain language on the rules that we apply and will disseminate this as widely as possible. We will be open about how we set about our work, including any changes that we make, consulting businesses, voluntary organisations, charities, consumers and workforce representatives. We will discuss general issues, specific compliance failures or problems with anyone experiencing difficulties.

HELPFULNESS

We believe that prevention is better than cure and that our role therefore involves actively working with businesses, especially small and medium sized businesses, to advise on and assist with compliance. We will endeavour to provide a courteous and efficient service and our staff will identify themselves by name. If appropriate we will provide a contact point and telephone number for further dealings with us and we will encourage businesses to seek advice/information from us. Applications for approval of establishments, licences, registrations etc. will be dealt with efficiently and promptly. We will endeavour to ensure that, wherever practicable, our enforcement services are effectively co-ordinated to minimise unnecessary overlaps and time delays.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT SERVICE

We will provide well publicised, effective and timely complaints procedures easily accessible to businesses, the public, employees and consumer groups. In cases where disputes cannot be resolved, any right of complaint or appeal will be explained, with details of the process and the likely time-scales involved.

PROPORTIONALITY

We will minimise the costs of compliance for businesses by ensuring that any action we require is proportionate to the risks. As far as the law allows, we will take account of the circumstances of the case and the attitude of the operator or individual when considering action.

We will take particular care to work with small businesses and voluntary and community organisations so that they can meet their legal obligations without unnecessary expense, where practicable.

CONSISTENCY

We will carry out our duties in a fair, equitable and consistent manner. While inspectors are expected to exercise judgement in individual cases, we will have arrangements in place to promote consistency, including effective arrangements for liaison with other authorities and enforcement bodies through schemes such as those operated by the Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Food and Trading Standards (LACOTS) and the Local Authority National Type Approval Confederation (LANTAC).

Principles of Good Enforcement:

Procedures

Advice from an officer will be put clearly and simply and will be confirmed in writing, on request, explaining why any remedial work is necessary and over what time-scale and making sure that legal requirements are clearly distinguished from best practice advice. Before formal enforcement action is taken, officers will provide an opportunity to discuss the circumstances of the case and, if possible, resolve points of difference, unless immediate action is required (for example, in the interests of health and safety or environmental protection or to prevent evidence being destroyed).

Where immediate action is considered necessary, an explanation of why such action was required will be given at the time and confirmed in writing in most cases without 5 working days and, in all cases, within 10 working days.

Where there are rights of appeal against formal action, advice on the appeal mechanism will be clearly set out in writing at the time the action is taken (whenever possible this advice will be issued with the enforcement notice).